

## Flimflam merchants

**By Constance Scrafield**

Things are very busy these days, could be as finally a reaction to the stillness of the Covid days ? ha! President Biden announced formally ? ?The pandemic is over!?

No longer need to worry about that, gang ? we got 'er beat.

Except that 400 Americans a day are dying of Covid, except for the days when the numbers are higher, with a note of ?two million cases in the last 28 days,? from a source at the University of Minnesota, calling Covid ?the No. 4 cause of death in the USA.?

Reaction to the comment Mr. Biden made on a television interview with ?60 Minutes,? taped at the Detroit Auto Show last week was swift. It began with the comment that such a call has to come from the World Health Organization (WHO), Director General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Dr. Tedros remarked, according to the New York Times, ?We're not there yet...but the end is in sight.?

Mr. Biden's confidence was based on his pointing to the crowd listening to him- ?no one here is wearing a mask...? All the proof he needed, I guess.

Over a post-dinner brandy perhaps, do we hear Dr. Tedros in a moment of clearer honesty, telling his colleagues that Covid and its aliases will always be with us to a greater or lesser extent? Certainly, in our own community, people are still catching Covid and people are still dying of it.

In other news, the Moscow Times informs us, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told Vladimir Putin that now was ?not a time for war,? an admonishment more frankly stated than heretofore by such an ally as Modi. Russia is India's main arms supplier and the 1.4 billion population of India still depend very much on importing gas from Russia.

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, India with strong ties to Russia since the Cold War, has walked a tightrope over the matter but in this meeting at the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, Mr. Modi expressed the importance of ?democracy and diplomacy and dialogue.?

Putin, however, was unrepentant, saying there are no plans to change Russia's military operations in Ukraine. Reports of recruiters for the Russian military going among prison inmates, offering them freedom following their duties if they join the army and offices opening abroad for foreigners to join the Russian army have come through various news outlets, including the BBC.

The meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan took quite a different tone but maybe hid a similar content from Putin.

Said Mr. Erdogan, "He is actually showing me that he's willing to end this as soon as possible. That was my impression, because the way things are going right now are quite problematic [for Russia]."

In a subsequent interview with PBS, Mr. Erdogan was emphatic that all the lands occupied by the Russians during the invasion must be released back to Ukraine, right back to those occupied in 2014. We'll soon see how Mr. Putin feels about that as a solution to peace.

Lose face. Save face. The tender balancing act every states-person deals with, every face on the television or on line: all about the ?optics? and not much about the facts, the real intent or the needs.

Across the globe, this infection of truth vs consequence vs what-can-we -say -instead is historical. Leaders acquire their status in

whatever way works ? election truly or just lip service. By and large, in their early days, I believe most leaders want to do the best for their countries and its people. Yet inevitably it seems, the rot sets in and the way is lost. All that is left is words, not really all that worried about making sense of disappointment or real betrayal.

It is easy ? or is it ? to promise, to show caring ? to say the right words ? in the full knowledge that they are hollow, that what is being discussed is a sham and one which officials hope will be forgotten by the time the electorate's favour is wanted again.

That those promises can made once more, with more vigorous phrasing and again be waylaid by other issues, more dramatic, dealing with other characters, better diversions from the procrastination.

We do not need to block the streets or fill them with the bloody noses of angry protests.

Biden and Putin were my illustrations for all of this: if the pandemic is over, Biden did it. If not, say it is anyway and talk about other successes.

Putin denies any intention of ending his war crimes on Ukraine but makes vague reassurances where he thinks he must. There is no one yet to hold his feet to the fire but in the not much longer run, his war must be stopped. He must be stopped.

We Canadians must remember that we still have power over our elected officials. We are not stuck with them if they absolutely will not do their jobs. Without a drop of blood, we can vote ? we can tolerate their failures until election time and then we do have fair and legal voting in this country and it is the fire for their feet.